

THE FOLLY OF BEING SHODDY.

"What do you mean by 'shoddy'?" asked a young girl who overheard a group of women discussing a neighbor.

"Deliberately trying to appear what one is not," was one reply.

"Trying to deceive others and being woefully deceived oneself," came next.

Rather drastic definitions, aren't they? Yet few indeed will say they are too severe. The truth of the matter is that the great majority of civilized men and women instinctively resent pretense in others. In the eyes of well-trained, experienced people a plain garment of honesty and simplicity becomes every one far better than the most showy pretense he can put on. The garment of pretense is always transparent to every one save the wearer. Yes, worse than that; for it has a peculiar way of magnifying the very imperfections it is supposed to conceal. An incident taken from the ordinary avenues of life may serve to illustrate: A young man and his wife went into a small town not long ago, he to be head of the public school. They made considerable to-do about their learning, their scholastic degrees, their culture, their importance in the school and social world, and insisted on taking the leadership in most public affairs. They lived at home, it was soon discovered, in a state of crudeness and disorder and penuriousness that gave many signs of lack of refinement. People began to watch their scholarship and found it very imperfect, superficial. Their "degrees" proved to be no higher than those of several college graduates in the place. Sharp eyes caught one or the other "making breaks" against social good form. In all too short a time they were the laughing stock of the community, and were glad to go to a new field. Had they said nothing of themselves, made no pretenses, and lived in a state suitable to their station, they might have made a good many mistakes and have been forgiven therefor.

Shoddiness is a foolish effort to impose upon others; for indeed "ithers see us" in our real character, no matter what we pretend to be. "Be what you would seem to be" is a wisdom gem that has crystallized out of human experiences.—Wellspring.

REJECTED BLESSINGS.

No wonder so many of us are so poor in spiritual things. To our doors evermore come the heavenly messengers, their hands laden with rich blessings, which they wish to give to us. But we are so intent on our earthly ambitions that we do not see them nor open our doors to them, and waiting long in vain, they at last turn sadly away, leaving us unblessed in our poverty. If we would but train ourselves to take whatever gift God sends to us, we should soon become rich. God's blessings are ever at our doors. He is the giving God. The trouble with us is that we do not always recognize the blessings when they are offered us. Some of the richest of them come in forms of pain, struggle and sorrow. Let us learn to accept God's gifts, whether they shine in joy or are veiled in shadows.—J. R. Miller, D. D.

CAUSES OF UNREST.

There is such a thing as taking ourselves and the world too seriously, or at any rate too anxiously. Half of the secular unrest and dismal, profane sadness of modern society comes from the vain idea that every man is bound to be a critic of life, and to let no day pass without finding some fault with the general order of things, or projecting some plan for its improvement. And the other half comes from the greedy notion that a man's life does consist, after all, in the abundance of the things that he possesseth, and that it is somehow or other more respectable and pious to be always at work making a larger living than it is to lie on your back in the green pastures and beside the still waters and thank God you are alive.—Henry Van Dyke.

BEING A CHRISTIAN.

Being a Christian is being a worker. The best Christians are the best workers. The Christian always works on a large scale. However small the task may be, he looks at it and considers it in the light of eternity. No thing is menial, no service is irksome to the Christian. Being a Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ. To follow Him is to be constantly a worker, for He said: "My Father worketh hitherto and I will work." What an encouragement this is to the busy worker! The Bible is full of cheerful thoughts for the busy. The Christian life is a life of perennial joy. The only one who can eat his bread with true joy is the Christian. A good man's hands are stretched out in search of occupation. He loaths idleness. Whatsoever his hands find to do, he does it. The ideal good man places his hand to every good work that God places in his way.—William Bares Lower, D. D.

GIFTS OF HEALING.

Peter's shadow had healing power in it. The sick upon whom it rested even for a moment, as he passed by, became strong and well, and rose up cured and happy. There are those in every community who carry with them, wherever they go, a like influence of healing and blessing. They bear into a sick room a delicate sympathy which not only enters into the experience of the suffering, but puts new cheer and hope into the heart of the sufferer. They speak encouraging and inspiring words. Their face has in it a message of cheer wherever it appears. They bring some promise of God, some word of hope and encouragement. The discouraged man they meet is made to feel not only that he has found a friend who is truly interested in him, but also that, after all, his case is not so hopeless as he imagined it to be, and that he need not despair. He is ready to try again. It is a blessed thing to carry such cheer and sympathy to despondent hearts.—Forward.

Live in the fellowship with God by prayer, and in fellowship with men by sympathy. And above all, believe in the efficacy of prayer. Do not think it is merely the prerogative of a few princely souls. Elijah became what he was, and wielded the power which he did, through prayer.